

## Falls: Simple tips can reduce your risk\*

### Am I at risk for falls?

Anyone can be at risk for falls. But certain things may make falls more likely.

- Weakness, fatigue, illness
- Poor physical condition
- Poor vision
- Medicines or disease that makes you weak, sleepy, confused, or dizzy
- Floors or stairs that are slippery or wet
- Walkways that are blocked, clogged, or poorly lit

### How can I reduce my risk for falls?

#### Take care of yourself

- **Drink enough liquid.**  
You can lose your balance easier when your body is “thirsty.”
- **Keep your eyes healthy.**  
Make a visit to your doctor to check your vision. If you have a prescription for glasses or contact lenses, make sure it still works for you.
- **Talk to your doctor if your disease or your medicine makes you light-headed, sluggish, or confused.**  
You may be able to take another medicine, or your doctor may have advice on how to reduce its side effects.
- **Follow the recommendations of a physical therapist, if you see one.**
- **Exercise.**  
Regular exercise builds strength.

#### Think about safety when you walk or sit

- **Walk in well-lit areas.**  
When you enter a room, turn on the lights.
- **Check that you have a clear path.**
- **Grasp handrails alongside stairs.**  
If the stairway has no handrails, walk slowly and carefully.
- **Wear shoes with firm, flat, non-slip soles.**  
Wear shoes with backs (not “flip-flops” or backless slippers).
- **Replace worn rubber tips on canes and walkers.**

- **Use chairs with arm rests to help you sit down and get up.**

Try to sit in chairs that stay in place when you get in and out of them.

### Small changes in your home can help

You don't need to spend a lot of money to make your home more fall-proof. Your social worker at the Clinical Center can help you find resources to make changes like these:

- Installing “clap-on” lights, light timers, or lights that turn on when sensing motion
- Installing night lights in your bedroom, bathroom and in the hallway leading to the bathroom
- Clearing floors of shoes, clothing, papers, books, and tools
- Using rubber mats instead of small area or throw rugs—or better yet, remove small rugs
- Keeping needed items within reach
- Making sure you can easily get in and out of bed
- Putting non-slip treads on stairs
- Putting non-slip decals in the tub or shower, or using a non-slip mat
- Putting grab bars near the toilet, tub, or shower

### Be extra careful in the hospital

In hospitals or other health care settings, falls can happen when patients try to get out of bed by themselves to use the bathroom or just to walk around their rooms. If you feel unsteady and need to get out of bed, use your call button to ask for help.

So that you can stay safe if you need to get out of bed:

- Ask for help when you need to use the bathroom, walk around your hospital room, or walk in hospital hallways.
- Wear non-slip socks or footwear.
- Lower the height of your bed and side rails.

You can always ask any member of your health team to assist you. Your safety is our goal.

*\*Adapted from: “SpeakUp™—Reduce your risk of falling” by the Joint Commission*  
<http://www.jointcommission.org/>

This information is prepared specifically for persons taking part in clinical research at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center and may not apply to patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

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